DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 171 367 PS 010 505

AUTHOR Read, Martha, Comp.
TITLE How Do the Preschool Children of the Community Education Center Perform in the Public School System?: An Evaluation of Children's Performance and Parent Participation.
INSTITUTION Community Education Center, Redwood City, Calif.
PUB DATE Feb 79
NOTE 42p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Bilingual Education; Early Childhood Education; Elementary School Students; Followup Studies; Low Income Groups; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Preschool Children; *Preschool Programs; *Program Effectiveness; Spanish Speaking
IDENTIFIERS *Community Education Centers

ABSTRACT

A follow-up study of 104 Spanish-speaking children who attended a bilingual-bicultural preschool program was conducted to investigate the children's relative standing in elementary school and the degree of parent participation in school activities. School achievement level of all available children who had attended the Community Education Center (CEC) from 1973 to 1977 was obtained by a teacher questionnaire. Information on parent participation was obtained by a home interview and the teacher questionnaire. Additional information on parent participation programs offered by the children's schools was obtained by a checklist for teachers and parents. Teacher evaluations indicated that, when considered as a group, the CEC children were rated average for their class. Of the 43 children in primary grades, 23% had been retained since they began school. This rate compared favorably with the 85% retention rate of children with Spanish surnames in the school in which CEC children were enrolled. Ratings of children's standings correlated with degree of parent participation. Parents seemed to recognize the importance of parent involvement, but to lack the necessary tools to participate in public school activities. Additional information concerning parent participation is discussed in detail. (SS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED171367

HOW DO THE PRESCHOOL CHILDREN OF THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER PERFORM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM? : An Evaluation of Children's Performance and Parent Participation.

Compiled by:
Martha Read
February, 1979

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Martha Read

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS010505

Community Education Center
P.O. Box 5382
Redwood City, Ca. 94063

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to the teachers of the Redwood City Schools who participated in this study and to the Redwood City School District Office for their help and cooperation.

I would like to especially thank Joyce Hahn and Ernie Rodriquez for their professional help and encouragement throughout the project. Without them this study would not have been possible. Also, many thanks to present and former staff members of C.E.C. for all their varied but valuable contributions, and to Olga Ricohermoso for all her typing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED	2
III.	METHODS	2
IV.	PROCEDURE	3
	Population	3
	Instruments	4
	Collection of Information	6
	Compilation and Analysis of Numerical Information	7
V.	RESULTS	9
	Children	9
	Parent/School	11
	Section 1	11
	Section 2	11
	Parent/School Communication	18
VI.	CONCLUSIONS	20
VII.	APPENDIX	24
VIII.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	36

I. INTRODUCTION

The past fifteen years have been a crucial period in the development of preschool programs. The goals of these programs have been varied and ambitious. An initial expectation of many of the programs was to provide a year of preschool experience that could overcome any educational or economic deprivation that a child might have. Preschool could not reasonably be intended to produce a generation of superior students. The most important of all the changes to occur over the years has been the move towards realistically understanding the potentials of preschool.

The Community Education Center,(C.E.C.) is one of these preschool programs. Its main purpose is to give Spanish speaking children of low socio-economic status a year of positive preschool experience so that they may begin kindergarten on an equal basis with the rest of the children from the community at large. There has never been a comprehensive evaluation done of its program and C.E.C.'s staff and board of directors wanted to know the long range effects, if any, that it has had on the children's performance in school. Parental involvement has always been a very important component of the program: did parents continue to participate in their children's education once the children reached public school? Do the parents feel that C.E.C. was worthwhile?

The Community Education Center is a bilingual-bicultural preschool which has been in operation for fifteen years in Redwood City. It is designed to give the Spanish speaking children of the Redwood City area a year of concentrated exposure to English and an emphasis on Spanish concept learning; it also provides an opportunity for children to accustom themselves to a school situation. Many of the children come from monolingual Spanish homes where they hear very little English. To begin school with no speaking ability in the dominant language is an immediate disadvantage. C.E.C. attempts to

help the children by providing a familiarity with English. The aim is to give the children a firm basis to start from which could put them on an equal footing with the non-Spanish speaking children. Other components which supplement these academic goals are a variety of informational services, health services and parent education.

In addition to the language differences that a large number of the children have, many also come from homes where the parents have received a bare minimum of formal schooling. It is harder for a child to succeed in school when his/her parents have not had exposure to structured learning. For all the parents there is a program of parent education which helps them to learn more about their children. C.E.C. tries to provide both the children and the parents with a positive educational experience.

II. QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. Children
   a. How are they doing in public school?
   b. Is there a correlation between children who did well in school and those whose parents participate a lot?
   c. Are the children maintaining the same level of competence as they had when they left C.E.C.?

2. Parents
   a. How much did parents participate in school activities once their children were in public school?
   b. How did parents feel about the C.E.C. experience, both for themselves and for their children?
   c. What ways do the parents see that the schools are using to involve them?

3. Schools
   a. What methods do the schools use to involve parents?

III. METHODS

To collect the information necessary to answer the above questions we decided to talk with the parents and teachers and ask them about

related areas. The information for each category was obtained in the following way:

1. Children: To determine how each child was doing in his/her current grade during school year 77-78, a questionnaire was given to the teachers for them to complete on the child's performance. Information on where the child stood when s/he left C.E.C. was found in the C.E.C. files by using the percentile scores from the standardized test that was administered during the year; his/her standing on completing the kindergarten year was determined by an evaluation done by the kindergarten teacher. This information was also in the C.E.C. files.

2. Parents: To establish the extent to which parents participated in the school activities, they were asked a number of questions about the schools. This was done in an interview in their homes. Several questions were also asked of each child's teacher concerning the involvement of the parents.

   The other aspect involving the parents was a subjective evaluation of the C.E.C. program. Thirty families were interviewed using questions that dealt with several major areas of the program.

3. Schools: To better understand the parent participation programs of the schools a list of questions was put together asking about the different methods the schools used. The same questions were given to the teachers and to the parents.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Population

The population available to work from was all those children who had attended C.E.C. from 1973 to 1977. This was a total of 189 children, representing 160 families. Some of the families had had more than one child in the program which accounted for the smaller number of families than children. A number of the families had moved and were no longer traceable. From the initial number of 189, efforts were made to locate the families by using the school district map and identifying each family with a particular school. Addresses were checked with the school and of those thirty children unaccounted for a list of names was

submitted to the school district office for more up to date information. Approximately one half of the children on this list were found to be attending another school within the district. With families that had moved during the course of the study it was decided not to try and locate them through the district as it was a time consuming task to check the files and could only be done by district personnel. A total of 104 children and 83 families were located in seven schools. These seven schools were chosen because they had the heaviest concentration of C.E.C. children. The grade breakdown for these 104 children was as follows:

kindergarten	31
first	34
second	29
third	10

The final information was analyzed using 62 of this original number. Teacher evaluations that were returned with incomplete information and families where nobody was found at home were dropped from the study.

The qualitative part of the study was conducted by interviewing 30 of the families. These families were randomly selected from the 61 families for whom there was completed information.

B. Instruments

Children: To find out how well the children were doing a questionnaire was devised containing questions on four different areas of ability. First, the teacher was asked to compare the child to the rest of the class by indicating an excellent, good, average or below average for each of these four areas. The areas that the teacher was asked to consider were 1. language, Spanish and English. 2. math 3. basic skills 4. social skills. Second, the teacher was asked to compare the child to other Spanish speakers who had not had preschool, using the same format. This section evaluating the child's abilities was the same as a questionnaire that had been used in previous years by the C.E.C. teachers. Forms were sent to the kindergarten teachers upon completion

of the child's first year in public school and later returned to C.E.C. These kindergarten evaluations were available for most of the children in the C.E.C. files. Also included in the C.E.C. files were the percentile scores from the Caldwell Preschool Inventory. This was a language and concept test administered to all the children in October and May of the year they were in C.E.C.

Parents: To evaluate parent participation both parents and teachers were questioned. A parent questionnaire was designed to reveal how much the parents knew about their child's schooling. For instance, knowing the teacher's name would indicate some level of involvement. The second measure of the parents' involvement was done by the teachers. They were asked to indicate how much the parents of a particular child participated in meetings, classroom activities, field trips, etc. To evaluate how the parents felt about the C.E.C. experience both for themselves and their children, a list of questions was prepared that explored the main components of the C.E.C. program. We wanted to know what the parents remembered as having been important or helpful and how well understood some of the basic ideas were. The questions touched on home visits by the teachers, parent meetings, parents' activities with their children, preparation for public schools both for children and parents, and suggestions.

Schools: To find out what methods the schools used for involving parents and how effective these methods were, a checklist of questions was compiled. Some of the questions asked what the teachers did, such as phone calls or home visits; other questions pertained to school-wide actions, parent meetings or notices sent home. During the same interview, the teacher was also asked to complete the checklist. Only one checklist was filled out for each class.

To measure the effectiveness of the methods used by the schools, this same checklist was taken to the parents and the questions were rephrased and asked from the parents' perspective. For instance, they were asked whether the school sent home notices in Spanish and if the school held parent meetings.

C. Collection of Information

Children: To talk to teachers it was first necessary to go to the school district office for permission. Once this was obtained, telephone contact was made with each of the seven principals. Six of the seven agreed to a brief meeting to arrange an interview schedule to use with the teachers. The seventh principal had his secretary make the arrangements. Twenty-six of the interviews were conducted on a one to one basis with the researcher and the teachers and 12 interviews from 2 schools were done with the teachers in a group. One school was dropped from the study at the principal's request. This school was closing at the end of the year and the teachers had an overload of paper work to complete. As there were only 7 children at the school, dropping it did not drastically alter the results of the study.

One of the group interviews was conducted before the teachers received the questionnaires. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and the teachers agreed to cooperate by filling out the questionnaires as best they could and returning them to the school office to be picked up from there by the researcher. The other group was interviewed after the questionnaires had been completed, and some of the general ideas raised by the questions were discussed at this time. In this second case the principal had given the teachers an explanation of the questionnaires and the study.

The individual teacher interviews were done mostly in the hour after school let out and before the teachers went home. Each interview was projected to take about half an hour although the actual time varied depending on the number of children in each class. In six weeks the 104 evaluations were completed.

Two other areas of information were available concerning the children; the Caldwell percentile scores and the kindergarten evaluations. Both of these were in the individual file of each child.

Parents:

Section one. The first contact with the parents was a face to face interview in their home where the questions about the school were discussed. Questionnaires for 61 families representing 77 children were completed. Of the other 22 families, 10 had moved or were away for the summer and 12 were not able to be reached after three attempts. 54 of the interviews were with mothers and 7 with fathers.

Section two. The qualitative evaluation was done by returning to the homes and re-interviewing 30 families. These thirty were randomly selected from the original number of 61 complete family interviews. An appointment was made by visiting the home to arrange for a convenient time to return and complete the questionnaire. All of these second interviews with only one exception took place with the mother; the exception was a family where both parents were present. The interviews for both sections were conducted in the first language of the parent.

Schools: The check list questions were presented to the teachers at the same time as the questions on the evaluations of the children. In the cases of individual interviews, the researcher read off the questions and the teachers simply answered yes or no. If there was additional information that they wished to add, they were encouraged to do so, and it was noted accordingly.

The parents' checklist was completed in the first interview along with the questions on the schools. It was explained to the parents that one aspect of the study was to find out what the teachers and the schools did to keep in contact with the families. They were asked to answer based on their individual experiences.

D. Compilation and Analysis of Numerical Information

To correlate the various sections of information it was necessary to give each area some kind of numerical score.

Children: The average mean was taken from the evaluations done by the teachers on the individual children; take the following example as an illustration:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average
Spanish		X		
English		X		
Math	X			
Basic Skills			X	
Social Skills				X

The categories along the top were each given a number, excellent = 4 , good = 3 , average = 2 and below average = 1. The numbers were counted up, two 3's, one 4, one 2, and one 1 for a total of 13. This total divided by the number of subjects equals 2.6, which is the average score for this hypothetical student.

The kindergarten evaluations were also scored in this way and no change needed to be made to the Caldwell percentile scores as they were already in a numerical form.

Parents: All the questions directed towards the parents asking them about the schools were scored by determining the number of yes answers. The combination of these questions plus the 4 questions from the checklist asking if the parents ever participated at school, provided a score which indicated how involved the parents were with the schools. The higher the number of the score, the more the parents tended to participate.

The evaluation done by the teachers on the parents' participation was scored in the same way as the evaluation of the child. A number representing the average mean was the result, with a maximum score of nine.

For the qualitative section each individual question was tabulated but no correlations were done. This was a subjective evaluation, a commentary on the C.E.C. program.

Schools: The teacher and parent checklists were scored by first tabulating the number of yes answers and second, writing a narrative of the comparisons.

All the statistical correlations were done using a simple correlation coefficient.

V. RESULTS

Children: The main question is "How are the children doing in the public schools; are they holding their own with the rest of the school population?" To determine how children actually did as compared to the rest of their class in public school, the information from the teacher evaluations was used. The average mean of these scores was calculated to establish where the C.E.C. group as a whole stood. On a scale of 1.0 minimum and 4.0 maximum, the C.E.C. average was 2.6. This indicated that when considered as a group, the C.E.C. children stood precisely in the middle. Considering that the objective of C.E.C. was to prepare children to be able to hold their own when placed in a regular school situation, this score of 2.6 is excellent.

In order to understand how the scores were distributed and how children at each grade level performed, the following table gives a further breakdown:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average
K	1	5	14	2
1		5	11	3
2		3	3	6
3	2	6	1	
Totals	3	19	29	11

The majority of the children fell into the "good and average" categories.

The individual grade averages for 77-78 were: kindergarten - 2.72 , first - 2.44 , second - 2.07 , third - 3.33. The third grade average is higher because that was the first year to be included in the study and therefore does not include any children who attended C.E.C. and may have repeated from the previous year. The kindergarten, first, and second grade classes do include retentions. In the kindergarten and first grades there were three retentions in each grade and in the second grade there were four. Excluding the children who were in kindergarten for their first year there was a total of 43 children. Of these, 23% had been retained since they began school.

In comparing the retention rate of C.E.C. children to that of Hoover school which had the highest number of C.E.C. students, it was found that Hoover had a rate of 18%. We compared the Redwood City figures to those from a neighboring district and found the difference to be very slight. The neighboring district had a rate of 20%. All of the figures were determined by establishing the number of children who had repeated at any time since kindergarten up until the third grade. From Hoover, overwhelming percentages of the retentions were Spanish surnamed children. Of the total of 52 who had repeated, 85% of these were Spanish surnamed. This is in a school where the percentage of Spanish surnamed children is only 62%. Hoover did not have the precise breakdown of the Spanish surnamed children to be able to know which children were actually Spanish speaking. Since this was the only way that they keep their records it must be assumed that this is an approximate figure as not all Spanish surnamed children are Spanish speaking. Only a general comparison of figures can be made between C.E.C. and Hoover because the basic population of C.E.C. children tends to be much higher monolingual Spanish. On an average 60% of C.E.C. is monolingual Spanish and 90% is Spanish surnamed.

Parent/School

Section 1. The ways that a school uses to contact parents and try to involve them depends to a large extent on the personalities of the teachers. During the teacher interviews there were several recurrent themes of methods used. One was that the administration has contact with the families which does not involve the teachers. These contacts were: 1. the translation of notes into Spanish. 2. having Spanish speaking personnel in the school office. 3. holding regular parent meetings, and 4, in one school there was a community room where parents could go. There may have been other methods which weren't brought out through the questionnaire or through the teachers' comments. In addition to the administration's methods almost every teacher had his/her own method of communicating with the parents. Some of the things mentioned were:

use of room mother

personal notes sent home - "happy notes, happigram, good slips"

biweekly progress reports

using informal personal contact with parents as they pick up their children

conferences

potlucks and school holiday celebrations - Christmas, 5 de mayo, open house, back to school night

class newsletter

comments written on papers

toy lending - games to check out to take home to use

using things in class which children have brought from home

inviting parents to class parties or just for a visit

being friendly

Comparing the results of the checklist answered by parents and by the teachers there were inevitable differences as the information came from two such different perspectives. Parents tended to be more generous in describing their children's teachers as Spanish speaking, whereas many of the teachers considered that they spoke only a small

bit of Spanish. Twelve percent of the parents said that they did not receive notes in Spanish from the school and later in the interview they admitted that they never read what came from the school regardless of the language it was written in. Although all the teachers said that the parent-teacher conferences were held in Spanish with someone from the school to interpret if necessary, 12% of the parents said that they could never count on the school to provide a translator. Often times the child who the conference concerned was taken by the parent to translate.

Teachers stated that they do make home visits and telephone calls but almost exclusively in cases of real need or particular problems.

The system used by the schools for setting up the Parents Association was administered through the school office. Of the teachers, 13% did not know how people became members of the advisory committee. Parents tended not to know many details of the meetings. For instance, 48% did not know whether or not child care was provided during the meetings.

Questions asking about actual activities that the parents could have participated in at school yielded low positive responses indicating that they did not often go for these activities. Teachers on the other hand, responded that they did have a fair amount of help in the classroom or on field trips. Many parents would go to school for a special occasion, a holiday celebration for example (question #16) but they would be unable to participate on a regular basis because of work.

The public schools have certain built in ways that parents can use to get to know each other. Any kind of general school function, back to school night or open house, serves as common ground for the parents, and in addition there is the informal contact of meeting each other before and after conferences.

The majority of the parents heard and understood the message from the teachers and the principals on ways in which they could help their children at home. Whether they followed up on this was not discussed, but the parents expressed 100% approval for the teachers; they had confidence in the teachers and felt that they were sincere in their work.

The parent questionnaire which determined how much a parent was involved indicated that when parents were asked about specific informational items they tended to know less than when they were asked about general areas. Questions # 1,2,3 and 9 required very specific responses and on the whole had the lowest positive responses. In general, parents knew what kinds of books or papers their children brought home and what kinds of field trips the class took. The one conspicuously low score was the response to question 11, "Are you satisfied with the parents association?" Only 44% replied that they were satisfied. The other 66% was unaware of what the parent committee did.

Ten different correlations were run using various combinations of the above information. All the correlation results were significant at the 5% level.

To answer the question "Are children doing as well in public school as when they left C.E.C." , graph 1 (see appendix) shows that there does appear to be a slight tendency for them to maintain the same standing. The correlation, significant at the 5% level, indicated that there was <u>some</u> possibility that children who performed well in C.E.C. would continue to do well in public school.

Summarizing the results of the correlations and graphs, a correlation exists between those children who did better in school and those whose parents were more involved or participated more (graph 2). The correlation was not as high when the parent participation was evaluated by the teachers and compared to the children's performance (graph 3). The Caldwell percentile scores did not provide a very accurate indication of how children would do in kindergarten. It did not follow that

those who scored well on the Caldwell did well in kindergarten, (graph 4). In comparing the evaluations which were done at the end of the kindergarten years to the current evaluations by the teachers there was again a correlation, but not a particularly strong one, (graph 5).

The fact that the majority of the children were dominant Spanish speakers did not give them any advantage when rated in the language category of the teacher evaluation. Graph #6 shows the correlation between the evaluation scores including the Spanish (x axis) and the same scores excluding the Spanish (y axis). There was essentially no difference in the scores as they correlated at .971.

Section 2. The second section of the parent study was to determine to what extent the parents felt that the goals of C.E.C. were met. Thirty families were involved in this section of the study. Many people did not remember specific things about C.E.C. but almost without exception they remembered enough to express an opinion.

1. The majority of the parents remembered the teachers coming to their homes with an activity. Only three did not recall any visits. Although the main purpose of the visits was to teach the parents how to work with their children using the activities brought by the teacher, only five of the parents answered that this was what they understood the purpose of the visit to be. Of the remaining parents 11 answered that the teacher had brought an activity to do with the child but that the mother was always present observing. The other 11 parents said that the teacher came only to do the activity with the child.

Parents expressed that they had learned about a wide range of topics through the teacher visits and an overwhelming number said that the visits were helpful. The personal contact with the teacher gave parents an opportunity to observe and learn both teaching methods and positive forms of interaction to use with their children. The visits also provided the parents with a chance to see what their child knew and because the visits continued throughout the school year, they were able to

observe the child's progress. Many parents needed help in exploring new ways of relating to their children, so the teachers were able to serve as positive role models. Several parents said that it helped them considerably to see the patience and interest with which the teachers dealt with the children.

A regularly scheduled time to meet with each family gave the parents a way to help bridge the distance between home and school. Only six parents answered that they didn't know why the visits were important, all others gave positive reasons.

2. Parents did not participate in C.E.C. parent meetings to a very great extent but of the meetings that they did attend, many were business oriented or social occasions. There also were meetings which involved discussions; these discussions ranged in topic from how to prepare your child for public school to general conversation about problems that parents encountered with their children. Since large number of meetings dealt with fund raising and other business related issues they can not be considered to have helped parents learn about their children. The meetings that did relate to this issue, helped parents by providing a situation where parents could learn from each other. Two parents said they were shy and hesitant about speaking in front of other people but that they were able to benefit greatly by being able to listen to others express similar problems and concerns.

3. The list of answers to "What did the teachers do in the C.E.C. classes?" was long as parents began to remember back to specific activities. It was possible to divide the responses into three basic categories: 1. parents who never went to the school, 2. parents who did go and observed teachers working with children using a variety of constructive activities which involved art and play, 3. seeing the teachers helping parents to work with the children. Parents learned about various areas of child development and teaching ideas and concepts that they were then able to implement at home. The presence of

of the parent in the classroom gave the parent the opportunity to work with his/her own child and also to work with other children. Several parents felt that it was also important for the child to see his/her parent as a part of the school.

4. Almost all of the parents indicated that they do try to have some kind of positive interaction with their children during the day. Talking and questioning were considered positive activities because the parents initiated the communication and expressed an interest in what their children are doing. Eleven parents indicated that they try to encourage their children to do their homework and many times parents attempted to have the older children to help the younger ones. In contrast to the positive aspects there were those parents whose immediate response was that they scold their children. Two parents said that they don't do anything with their children.

5. Parents overwhelmingly indicated that C.E.C. had been a positive experience for their children. Twenty people, (67%) responded with very obvious enthusiasm; the other 10, (33%) were positive about the experience although not quite as lavish with their praise. There were several children who were initially reluctant to go to school; this disappeared however once the child became used to the school routine. All the parents but one stated affirmatively that their children had liked going to C.E.C. The one parent responded that her child had "sometimes" liked to go.

When asked what their children talked about when they came home from C.E.C., 23 answered that among other things the children recounted the activities of the day. Others talked about the teachers and their friends. Field trips and games were often mentioned as well liked activities. One child would tell her mother about the new things that she had done at school that day. Three children also talked about the food.

6. "Was your child ready to go to kindergarten?" Twenty-eight (93%) of the parents felt that yes, their children were ready for kindergarten; two (7%) of the parents said no, but that the lack of preparation was not the fault of C.E.C. One of these children had a speech defect which gave her learning problems and the other one was described as a "hard head" by her mother. Neither of the parents of these children blamed C.E.C. in any way for not preparing the children better.

The parents felt very strongly that C.E.C. had helped prepare the children before they went to kindergarten. The ways that parents mentioned in which C.E.C. had aided were twofold. First, in the area of building academic skills C.E.C. taught colors, shapes, letters, English, and art. Second were the social skills. These involved learning to get used to the school atmosphere, to get along with other children, to think, and to respect the teachers.

7. There was a general expression of acceptance towards the public school. Four parents were favorable about the school that their children attended but didn't think much of the public schools in general. The comparisons that they saw between C.E.C. and the public schools were not very great. The majority of the parents did not see any notable differences between the two; those who did saw it as the difference between having to teach children of different ages. Several parents saw C.E.C. as being more oriented towards the families through the personal contact that is used. One mother commented that she noticed more unity amoung the public school parents.

Eighty-three percent of the parents felt that C.E.C. had given them enough preparation both to know how to participate and to know why it was important to maintain the close home-school contact. The remaining 17% said they never go to public school meetings or to the classes so that the participation emphasis of C.E.C. had had no effect on them.

8. Not one parent had any major objections to the way the C.E.C. program was set up and run. The suggestions that were made were for the teachers to continue attending conferences in order to learn from the new educational theories; for more parental participation and more field trips. From one parent came the objection that she did not always hear very correct Spanish being spoken by some of the teachers and that she wanted her child to learn grammatical Spanish.

By and large what the parents appreciated most about the program was the respect and patience with which the teachers treated the children and the effort that they took to spend as much time as was necessary with each child.

Parent/School Communication

Information emerged during the interviews with the parents and the teachers which did not fit into any of the categories outlined by the questions. Two particular points were raised during the interviews which were extremely interesting and worth including because of their implications.

The first point illustrates the lack of communication between the schools and the parents. The case involved a family with two former C.E.C. children and a mother who was extremely ill. During the interviews with both of the children's teachers there was no mention of the mother's illness. It was reported that the parents attended the conferences but that beyond that there was no participation and no explanation given. The questions to the teachers were not intended to probe into areas which did not pertain to the study, in other words the teachers were not being asked to divulge confidential information; they were being asked for a measure of the parents participation. In various other cases when there was a reason that the parents were unable to participate, whether for work or sickness, this was mentioned in passing by the teacher. The teachers were also told at the beginning

of the interview that the researcher would be talking with the families in their homes. If for no other reason there was a strong indication of the teachers' involvement with his/her students when s/he knew enough about the family to know why the parents were not participating. In the case of the family with the ill mother, a very brief reference to the fact that she was unable to participate would have indicated that the teachers were aware of and hopefully sensitive to the family situation. The illness of a parent cannot help but affect a child in his/her day to day life at school and it would appear to be a very necessary piece of information for the teacher to have.

The second situation concerned that of an illiterate mother. The teacher needed to contact the parents to have the child brought in at a particular time for special testing as she felt there was something physically wrong with the child. Three different notes were sent home in an attempt to arrange for an appointment and each time the family failed to respond. In the meantime the teacher became extremely annoyed with the parents for not communicating and began to assume that it was due to lack of concern for the child. Finally a telephone call was made to the family and a time was arranged for the mother to go to school to discuss the matter with the teacher. From this face to face communication another appointment was made for the child to see a specialist and almost more importantly, the mother was informed about the notes she had received from the school and the teacher was reassured that the parent did care very much about the child. A whole situation had been created where the teacher was assuming things about the parents and the parents in turn were not understanding what was expected of them. Verbal communication is an essential element for the schools to use. It cannot be expected that notes that are sent home will be read or understood. Even if a note is written in Spanish there is no guarantee that the parents will understand it. As with the family mentioned above, it was not possible to resolve anything

until the people concerned were able to talk with each other directly.

The importance of verbal communication cannot be underestimated as this family situation is just one example of many similar cases that exist. It is imperative that teachers and administrators recognize this and use the simple tool of conversation for increased understanding.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

C.E.C. children have been able to hold their own in their respective public school classes. The average of the teacher evaluation scores located the children exactly in the middle when compared to the rest of the students. This is an excellent recommendation for C.E.C. as its purpose is to give a positive, beneficial year of preschool experience to children who come from backgrounds of limited educational opportunity. Preschool experience cannot be expected to transcend all the other difficulties that a child might face along the way, but it can provide an initial positive exposure to education. Eighty-three percent of the parents indicated in the second questionnaire that C.E.C. had definitely helped them learn about parent participation and about their children, and above all, that C.E.C. had been a very positive experience for them. It is vital that this first exposure to education be positive because it determines how both parents and children approach successive years in school.

The 23% retention rate for C.E.C. children in public school might at first seem disappointing, but when looked at in context of the low educational level of the parents, it can be considered very good. The average educational level of the families of C.E.C. from a survey taken in 1967 was 6 years of school. It is believed that this is still a representative figure. In addition to the family's educational background, which accounts for a certain number of retentions, there is the assumption that a higher number of Spanish speaking children will have to repeat because of language problems. Some of the schools have

bilingual programs and others do not, creating the overall effect of a high number of retentions of Spanish speaking children due to a lack of English skills. Another reason, as mentioned by one of the teachers, for the higher retention rates among the Spanish speaking children has to do with the general attitude towards the schools. In Mexico the schools are very definitely regarded as the authority and when a teacher says that a child should be retained this is accepted as fact and is not a decision to be argued with. This kind of decision is more often challenged in the U.S. than in Mexican society, with the result that more Latino children are retained.

Of the C.E.C. children who were in kindergarten in 1977-78, three of them or 16% were going to be retained for the next year. The teacher of two of them stated specifically that they were being retained because of language difficulties. If there continues to be an increase in the number of retentions past the first grade level, it is then the responsibility of the schools to provide an educational program that will help meet the needs of those children. For a large number of families there is the immediate need for effective bilingual education. In each successive year more C.E.C. children were retained as the following chart indicates:

year in C.E.C.	% of retentions
76-77	16%
75-76	16%
74-75	27%
73-74	31%

Most children will have a good language grounding by the time they finish the first grade and it cannot be expected that their preschool language experience is going to help them specifically after this. Once they pass the first grade level it is up to the schools to provide quality education. At this point the numbers of retentions become figures that the schools must account for. Although the information

collected in this study showed some evidence that children did better in school when their parents were involved, it was not absolutely conclusive. What it did show however was that C.E.C. provided the parents with a good basis for recognizing the importance of participating. Parents were able to see what they had learned with C.E.C., positive methods of interacting with their children and the importance of parental involvement. In many cases they were then able to incorporate some of these same ideas to use with their younger children. The idea of parent participation was conveyed and understood but the tools needed to implement the participation were lacking. Many parents did not know how to be involved. Although parents recognized the importance of participating once their children reach the public school level, they are unfortunately confronted with a whole new way of doing things. A number of parents said that they had gone to C.E.C. meetings but that they never went to anything that the public schools held. The structure of the public schools is much bigger and the entire system much more impersonal. Parents need an introduction to the schools just as much as the schools need an introduction to the parents.

C.E.C. could take the idea of an intensive training session for the parents as a goal. This could be done in the form of a parent meeting at the end of the year in which the structure of the public schools could be explained in detail and parents would be told what they should expect.

The responsibility for further educating the parents as to what to expect lies with C.E.C., but the schools also need to develop a way to help the parents. There needs to be an increased level of sensitivity in dealing with the Latino population. Because of the authority role that the schools play in Mexico, the idea of parent participation is very new and difficult for many people to accept. There needs to be a great deal of communication developed and maintained between home and school. The schools do make an effort to send written notes home, but there still

exists the problem of illiterate or undereducated parents who will not be reached through written communication. Parents expressed an enormous amount of confidence in the schools and the teachers and it is up to the schools to follow through and return the confidence and respect. It takes a bit more effort perhaps to take these extra steps to communicate with the parents, but if that effort is not made, the ones to suffer are the children.

Equally as important as the communication between school and home is the intra-school communication. This study indicates a real lack of communication between teachers and administration on some very basic issues concerning parental involvement. For instance, 13% of the teachers did not know how parents became members of the Advisory Committee. It would appear that parent participation is not a high priority with the schools, as the breakdown in communication occurs at such a basic level. Further investigation into this area is needed.

The importance of a program such as C.E.C. is evident. There will always be children who need the experience of preschool, and as long as this need exists, there must be programs to meet it.

There was a slight tendency for children to do better in school when their parents participated, and the majority of the parents understood the importance of parental involvement. This study has proven that the program used by C.E.C. was extremely effective in giving children a solid, positive experience with which to begin their education. Once beyond the preschool level, children were able to hold their own in the more formal public school situation, indicating that C.E.C. had done an excellent job of meeting its basic goal.

APPENDIX A

Graph 1 24

Graph 2 25

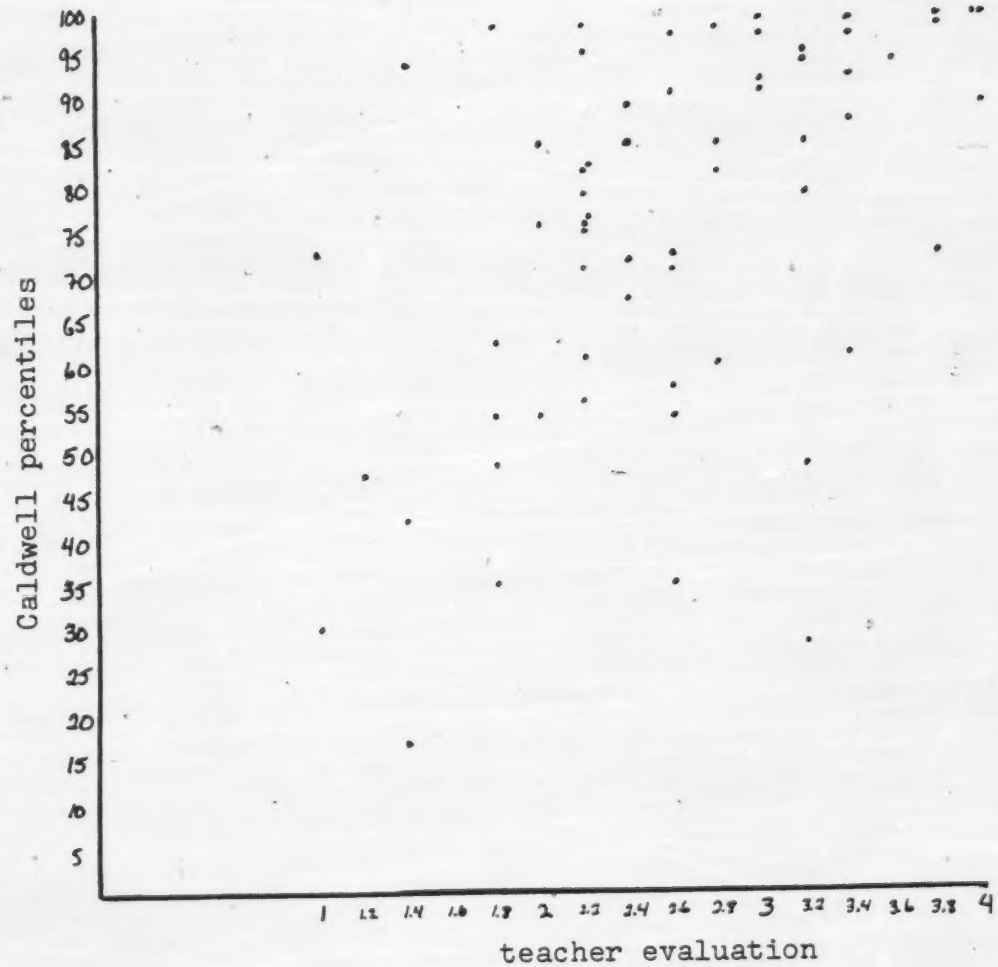
Graph 3 26

Graph 4 27

Graph 5 28

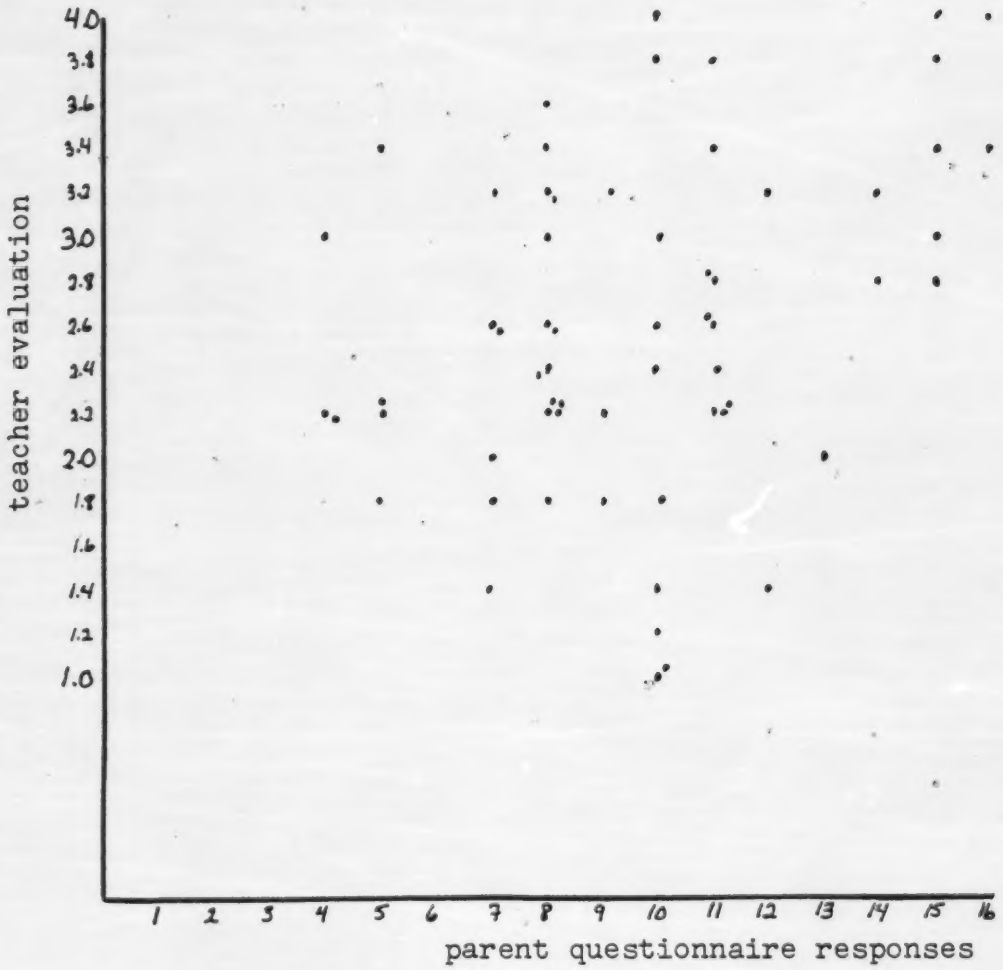
Graph 6 29

Graph 1


Caldwell percentiles
100
95
90
85
80
75
70
65
60
55
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
1
1.2
1.4
1.6
1.8
2
2.2
2.4
2.6
2.8
3
3.2
3.4
3.6
3.8
4
teacher evaluation

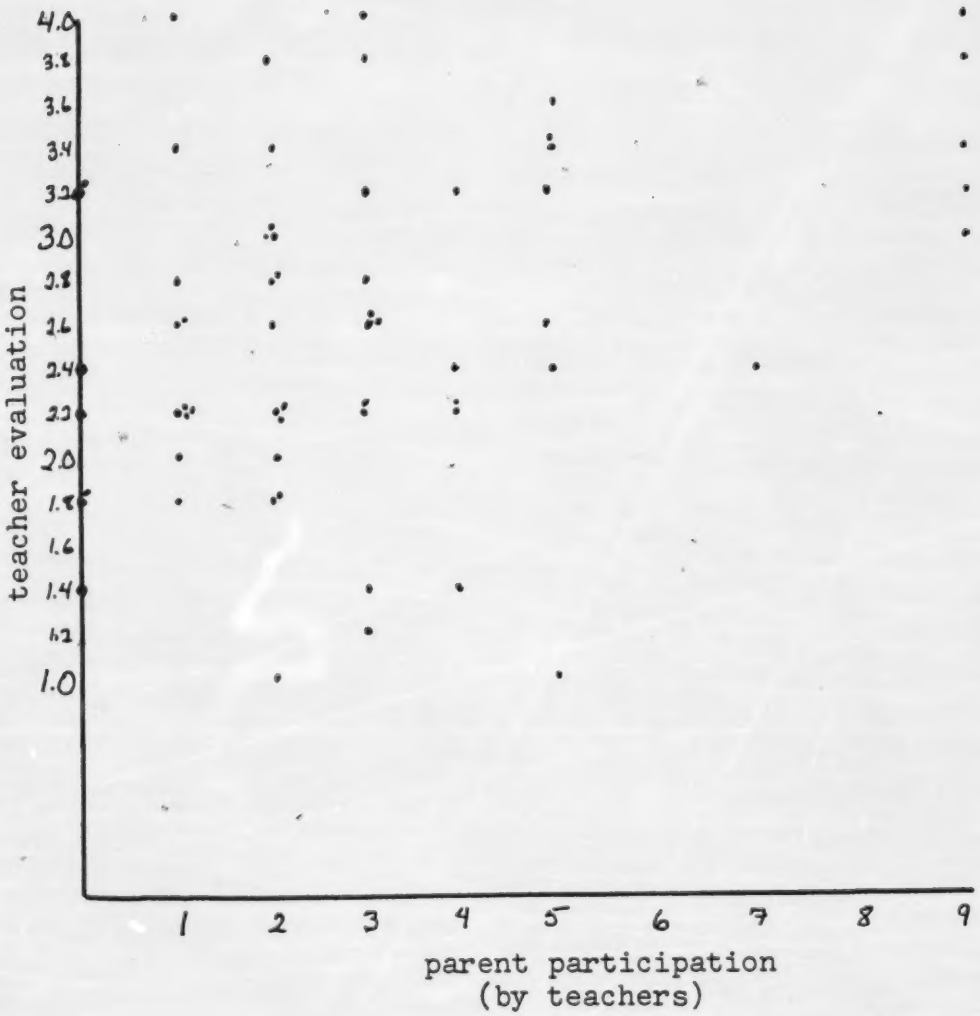
r=.473

Graph 2


4.0
3.8
3.6
3.4
3.2
3.0
2.8
2.6
2.4
2.2
2.0
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1.0
teacher evaluation
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
parent questionnaire responses

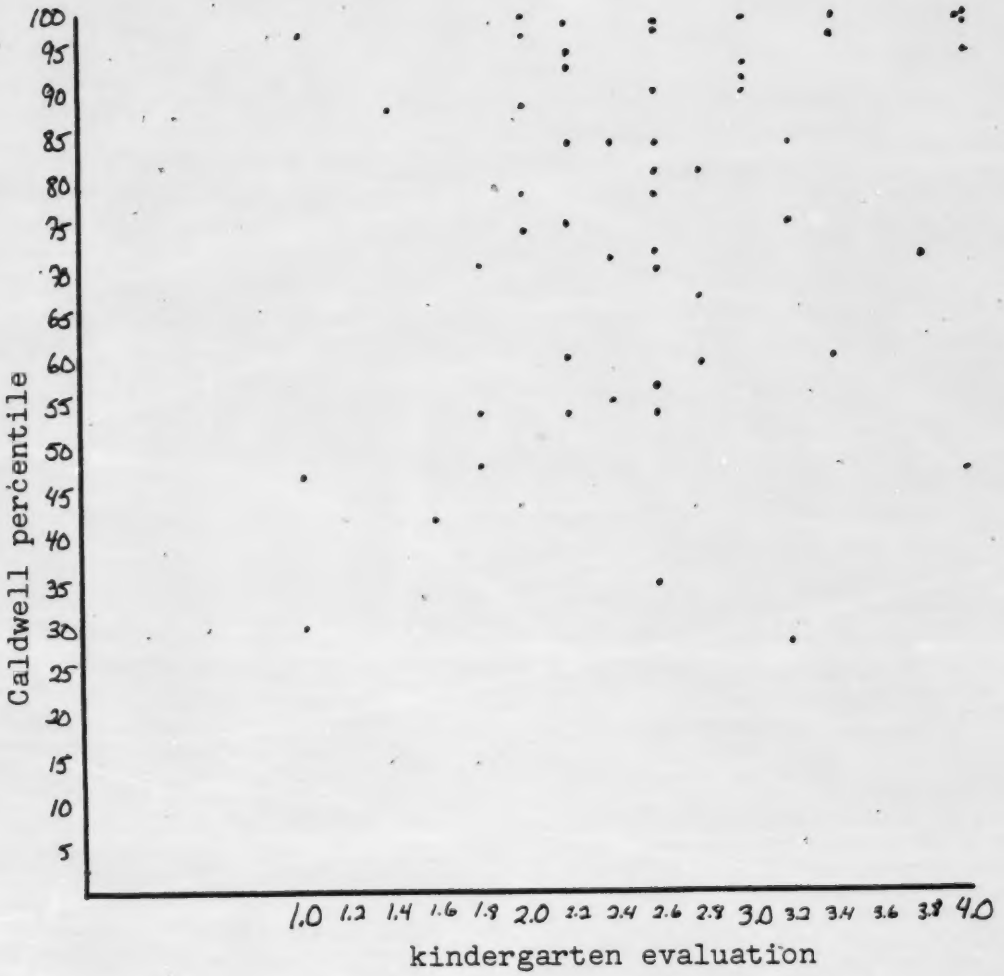
r=.462

Graph 3


4.0
3.8
3.6
3.4
3.2
3.0
2.8
2.6
2.4
2.2
2.0
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1.0
teacher evaluation
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
parent participation
(by teachers)

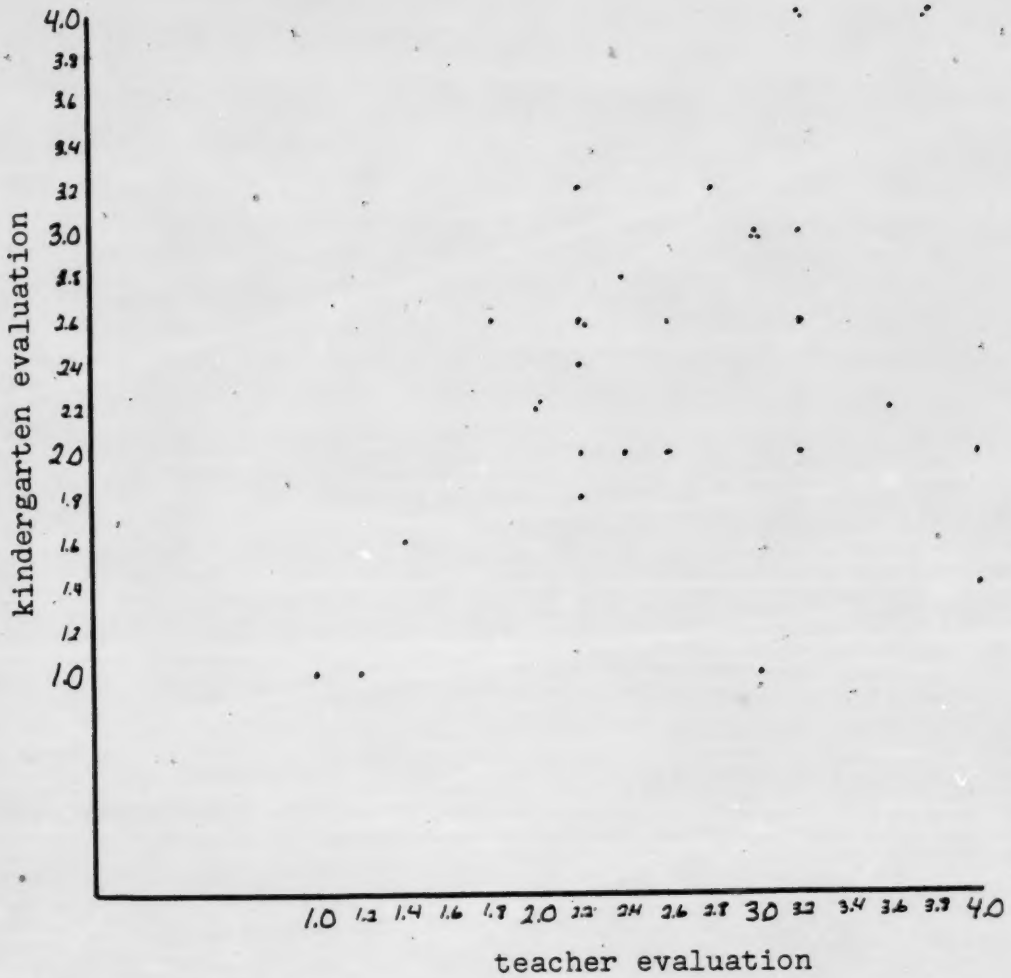
r=.319

Graph 4


Caldwell percentile
100
95
90
85
80
75
70
65
60
55
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
1.0 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2.0 2.2 2.4 2.6 2.8 3.0 3.2 3.4 3.6 3.8 4.0
kindergarten evaluation

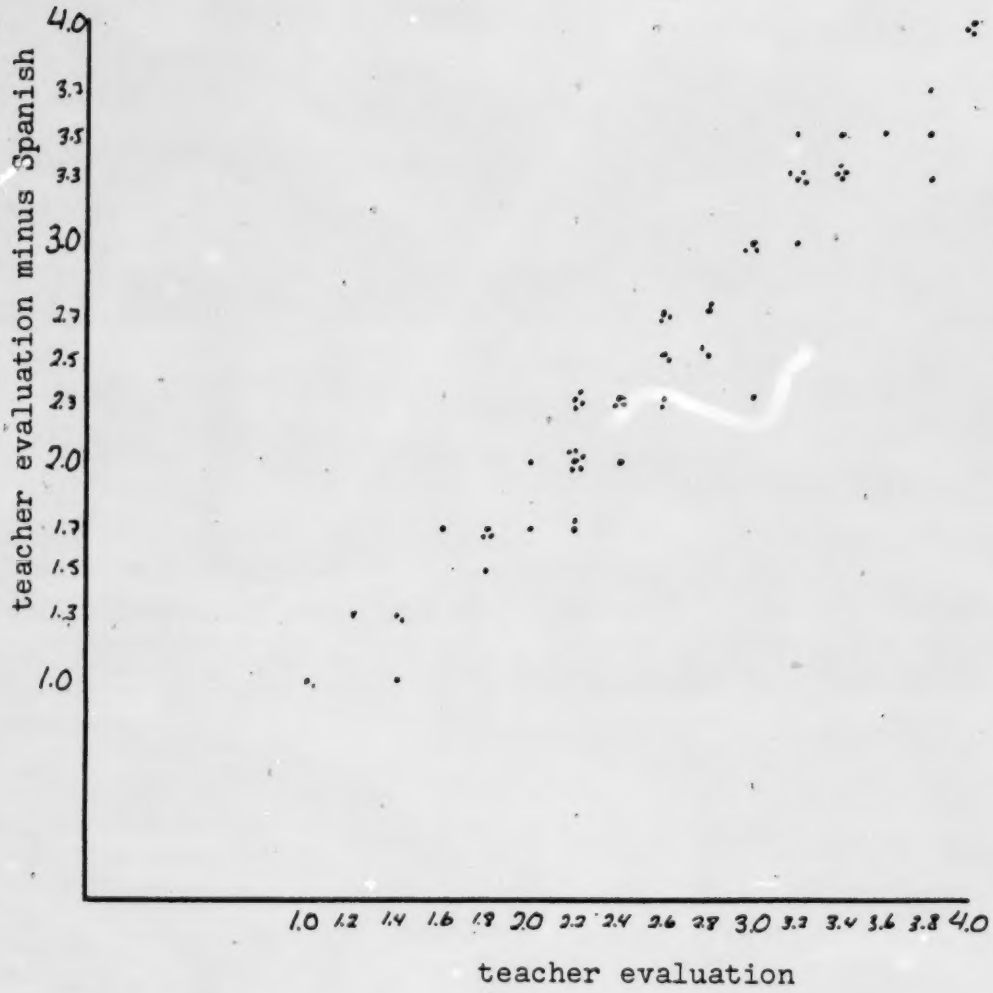
r=.369

Graph 5


kindergarten evaluation
4.0
3.8
3.6
3.4
3.2
3.0
2.8
2.6
2.4
2.2
2.0
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1.0
1.0 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2.0 2.2 2.4 2.6 2.8 3.0 3.2 3.4 3.6 3.8 4.0
teacher evaluation

r=.417

Graph 6


teacher evaluation minus Spanish
4.0
3.5
3.3
3.0
2.7
2.5
2.3
2.0
1.7
1.5
1.3
1.0
1.0 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2.0 2.2 2.4 2.6 2.8 3.0 3.2 3.4 3.6 3.8 4.0
teacher evaluation

r=.971

APPENDIX B

Teacher Questionnaire ... 30

Teacher Check List ... 31

Parent Check List ... 32

Parent Questionnaire ... 34

Second Parent Questionnaire ... 35

Teacher Questionnaire

1. Compare the child to the rest of the class:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average
a. Language Spanish English				
b. Math				
c. Basic Skills visual perception motor, etc.				
d. Social Skills				

2. Compare the child to other Spanish speaking children with no preschool:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average
a. Language Spanish English				
b. Math				
c. Basic Skills visual perception motor, etc.				
d. Social Skills				

3. Do any of these terms apply to the child? timid, aggressive, creative, sociable, hard worker, curious

4. Did the parents participate?

	A lot	Some	Not much	None
a. meetings				
b. classroom				
c. other				

5. Will the child go on to the next grade?

6. What kind of curriculum do you have?
   bilingual, ESL, simultaneous, etc.

7. Other comments about child?

Child's name _____ School _____

Teacher's name _____ Grade _____

Date _____

TEACHER CHECK LIST

1. Is there a Spanish speaking teacher or aide in your classroom?
   If not, are you studying Spanish?
2. Do you send notices home in Spanish?
3. Do you hold parent-teacher conferences?
4. Are the conferences held in Spanish?
5. Do you telephone the parents?
6. Do you make home visits?
7. Do you take any material or activity related to school when you visit the homes?
8. Do you hold parent workshops?
9. Are the parents asked to be on an advisory committee? elected/appointed.
10. Are there regular parent meetings?
11. Are notices sent home ahead of time? Are they sent with the children or mailed?
12. Are parent meetings held at night?
13. Are the parent meetings conducted in Spanish, English or bilingually?
14. Is there child care provided during the meetings?
15. Do parents participate in the classrooms as helpers?
16. Do parents participate in the classroom as resource people?
    (i.e. bringing special food, teaching a dance, telling stories)
17. Do you make sure there is something for the parents to do when they come?
18. Do you give the parents positive encouragement for their participation?
19. Do parents go on field trips with the class?
20. Do parents ever help in making materials for the classroom?
21. Are there opportunities provided for parents to get to know each other?
22. Does the school help with social services?
23. Do you explain to parents ways in which they can participate, both in the classroom and out?
24. Do you do anything to try and gain the confidence of the parents?
25. Do you think the parents interpret your efforts as being sincere?
26. Are there any other ways that you use to communicate with or involve parents?

PARENT CHECK LIST

1. Does the teacher or aide speak Spanish?
2. Do they send you notes in Spanish? Do you understand them?
3. Are parent-teacher conferences held?
4. Are the conferences held in Spanish?
5. Does the teacher call you on the telephone?
6. Does the teacher visit you at home?
7. When the teacher comes, does s/he bring any material or activity related to school?
8. Are there parent workshops held?
9. Were you asked to be a member of the Parent Advisory Committee?
10. Are there regular parent meetings?
11. Are notices sent home ahead of time? Do they come with the children or by mail?
12. Are the meetings held at night?
13. Are the meetings held in English, Spanish, or bilingually?
14. Is there child care provided during the meetings?
15. Do you participate in the classroom as a helper?
16. Do you go to the school for special occasions, such as bringing food or telling stories?
17. When you go to the classroom is there something for you to do?
18. Does the teacher thank you for your participation?
19. Do you participate in the field trips that the class goes on?
20. Do you help make materials for the class?
21. Does the school provide opportunities for you to get to know other parents?
22. If you have a problem with social services, does the school help you?
23. Did the teacher explain to you how you could participate in and out of the classroom?
24. Do you have confidence in the teacher?

25. Do you think the teacher is sincere?

26. Does the school use any other methods of communicating with you?

Date _____ Child's name _____

Parent's name _____

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is the name of your child's teacher?
2. What is your child studying?
3. What is your child's favorite subject?
4. What kind of field trips does your child's class take?
5. Does your child do special projects in school?
6. Do they celebrate special holidays in school?
7. What kinds of things does your child bring home from school?
8. Do you feel comfortable going to your child's class?
9. How many times have you visited your child's class?
10. Are you satisfied with the education that your child is receiving?
11. Are you satisfied with the Parents Association?
12. Can you think of improvements that could be made in the schools?

Parent's name _____

Child's name _____

Date _____

SECOND PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What did the C.E.C. teachers do when they came to visit you?
   Did the visits help you?
   What did you learn from the visits?
   Why do you think the visits were important or unimportant?

2. What do you remember of the parents meetings?
   In what way did the meetings help you learn more about your child?

3. What did the teachers do in the C.E.C. classes?
   What did you learn from being in the classes?

4. What do you do with your children at home?
   What is the most important thing you do with your children?

5. How did your child feel about C.E.C.?
   Did s/he like going to school?
   What did your child talk about at home when s/he talked of school?

6. Was your child ready to go to kindergarten?
   Do you think that C.E.C. helped prepare him/her?
   help in learning to share
   to get along well with other children
   to be independent
   to be alone

7. What do you think of the public schools?
   What comparisons do you see between C.E.C. and the public schools?
   For you as a parent, did C.E.C. give you sufficient preparation to be able to continue participating in the school activities?

8. What suggestions do you have to improve the C.E.C. program?
   What did you like most about the program?

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bronfenbrenner, Urie. A Report on Longitudinal Evaluations of Preschool Programs. Vol. I. Washington D.C. : Office of Child Development, (DHEW), 1974.

2. Bronfenbrenner, Urie. A Report on Longitudinal Evaluations of Preschool Programs. Vol. II. : Is Early Intervention Effective? Washington D.C. : Office of Child Development, (DHEW), 1974.

3. Cohen, Andrew. A Sociolinguistic Approach to Bilingual Education. Rowley, Ma. : Newbury House Publishers, 1975.

4. Hahn, Joyce and Dunstan, Virginia. "Bilingualism and Individualized Parent Education: An Organic Approach to Early Childhood Education". (unpublished article), July, 1974.

5. Hahn, Joyce and Dunstan, Virginia. "The Child's Whole World: A Bilingual Preschool that Includes Parent Training in the Home". Young Children, May, 1975, 281-288.

6. John, Vera P. and Horner, Vivian M. Early Childhood Bilingual Education. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1971.

7. Moore, Shirley G. "The Persistence of Preschool Effects: A National Collaborative Study" Young Children, March, 1978, 65-66.

8. "Research Report: Can Preschool Make a Difference?" Bulletin of the High/Scope Foundation, Fall 1977, No. 4, 1-3.

9. Zappert, Laraine Testa and Cruz, B. Roberto. Bilingual Education An Appraisal of Empirical Research. Berkeley: BABEL/LAU, 1977.